

FS Direct



Direct Communication to Foreign Service Employees and Family Members

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What's Inside

[NOTES FROM THE FIELD](#)

[NOTES FROM DAKAR](#)

[NOT-TO-BE-MISSED
INFORMATION](#)

[FAMILY MEMBER EMPLOYMENT](#)

[GOVERNMENT JOB
APPLICATIONS](#)

[FOREIGN SERVICE WRITTEN
EXAM DATE](#)

[ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION OF
SF-50S](#)

[GETTING INTO CONSULAR
ASSOCIATE TRAINING](#)

[NEWS FROM THE FOREIGN
SERVICE INSTITUTE](#)

[EDUCATION AND YOUTH](#)

[KID-VID CONTEST](#)

[SUPPORT SERVICES](#)

[SECURITY CLEARANCES](#)

[IQ: INFORMATION QUEST](#)

Happy New Year from the Family Liaison Office! **Click Your Way to FLO Resources**

FLO Homepage on the Intranet

<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/index.html>

FLO Homepage on the Internet

<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo>



EMPLOYMENT

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/28289.pdf>

The Network, the monthly FLO newsletter highlighting the Washington, D.C. job search, is now on the Internet!



EDUCATION AND YOUTH

<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/19998.htm>

Many returning Foreign Service students enrolled in Washington, D.C. area public schools are learning the hard way that the **Standards of Learning (SOL) tests** (required in Virginia), or other state-mandated achievement tests, are required for graduation. This paper addresses the Virginia Standards of Learning and includes links to SOL information from other states.



FS DIRECT SUBSCRIPTIONS

To subscribe, please use the following links:

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c9156.htm>

Intranet: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/FLO/FLOSubscription.html>

Via AAFSW: Visit the FLO area of the AAFSW web site at <http://www.aafsw.org> and click on FLO newsletters.

FS Direct is also available on the FLO Internet web site at <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/c5709.htm>

Notes from the Field

This new column will feature articles submitted by Foreign Service Officers or their family members serving at posts abroad. Descriptive articles on life at post are highly encouraged and welcomed. Please submit your article to the FLO Publications Coordinator at ayerstdm@state.gov.

Notes from Dakar

By Kahori Roskamp
September 2003

I apologize for the impersonal email...

It's been 11 days since Phil and I moved to Dakar, Senegal. Finally we got DSL at home an hour ago and I cannot explain how happy I am. It's been a torture to me not having an access to the outside world for 11 days. I felt like I was a cave woman.

We arrived in Dakar on the 10th of September, and from the moment we landed here we've had a fabulous time. We've met many very nice people (Americans with the US Embassy and also other ex-pats/foreigners living in Dakar for different reasons). Many of the people we have met have been very kind and helpful to us.

We live in a 3-bedroom apartment located literally a two-minute walk from the ocean and a 5-minute walk from the Club Med. On a nice clear day we can see the ocean between trees from the window in our study and guest bedroom. The weather has been fantastic. Starting sometime in winter (supposedly from November), all the greens will be gone and until next May we'll have dry season when everything stays pretty much brown.

The first two nights in Dakar, we already experienced black outs several times a night. Luckily the wonderful U.S. Embassy provides us with a generator, so we usually get energy back after having 30 seconds of complete darkness.

There are a good variety of restaurants in Dakar. You can pretty much get anything, even sushi. I know sushi in West Africa doesn't sound right, but according to those people who have had sushi here, it's pretty good. Restaurants and groceries are surprisingly expensive though. Saving money might not happen to us in Dakar...

One of the things that struck me in Senegal was how people drive here. I've never seen such aggressive/crazy drivers like the Senegalese before. There are traffic rules, but they are equal to nonexistent here. I've been using taxi as transportation a couple of times a day everyday and I haven't seen seatbelts except once. There are many other interesting things that I would like to write and I can go on and on, but I should end this one here.

Sometimes I feel like I have to pinch myself to realize that we're really in West Africa. It is really cool. I hope that you all are doing well in your respective places.

Love, Kahori

Not-to-be-Missed Information

AWARD NOMINATION TIME:

AFSA Awards

- The **Avis Bohlen** Award honors the accomplishments of a family member of a Foreign Service employee "whose relations with the American and foreign communities at post have done the most to advance the interests of the United States."
- The **M. Juanita Guess Award** honors a Community Liaison Coordinator "who has demonstrated outstanding dedication, energy and imagination in assisting the families of Americans serving at an overseas post."

For a complete listing of **all AFSA award categories**, nomination procedures, and online nomination forms visit AFSA's website at <http://www.afsa.org/awards/index.cfm>. Deadline for nominations is **February 12, 2004**. Any questions can be directed to Barbara Berger, Coordinator for Professional Issues, tel. 202-338-4045, ext. 521.

AAFSW Award

The **AAFSW/Secretary of State's Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad** presents a wonderful opportunity for individuals to recognize those at post who are there for others. If you know someone at your post that goes that extra mile, be sure to meet the nomination deadline of **Friday, January 30, 2004**. The awards will be presented on Foreign Affairs Day, May 7, 2004, in the Department of State. A winner will be chosen from each of the regional bureaus. In addition to travel to Washington for the awards ceremony, the winners will receive an award certificate from the Secretary of State, the Secretary's Pin and a cash award. See cable below for more details (NOTE: original cable erroneously gave January 9th as deadline date; attached cable has been corrected). For further information contact Ginny Taylor at ginnyestj@aol.com.

FSYF Award

Each year, the **Foreign Service Youth Foundation Award for Community Service** is conferred upon young people who have been nominated from around the world for their community service projects. It comes with a cash award, and last year the Secretary of State gave the opening remarks at the awards ceremony. The cable announcing the nomination process will be going out early this spring. Be thinking about young people in your mission community who could compete for this honor! To learn more about the award and the FSYF visit <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/2041.htm>.

THE J. KIRBY SIMON FOREIGN SERVICE TRUST

An Invitation to Propose Projects for Funding in 2004

The J. Kirby Simon Foreign Service Trust is a charitable fund established in the memory of Kirby Simon, a Foreign Service Officer who died in 1995 while serving in Taiwan. The Trust is committed to expanding the opportunities for professional fulfillment and community service of active Foreign Service Officers and Specialists and their families.

The principal activity of the Trust is to support projects that are initiated and carried out, not in an official capacity and not on official time, by Foreign Service personnel or members of their families, wherever located. The Trust, however, will also consider proposals from other U.S. Government employees or members of their families, regardless of nationality, who are located at American diplomatic posts abroad.

In 2003 the Trust made its seventh round of grant awards, 27 in all, ranging from \$600 to \$5000, for a total of \$60,020. These grants support the involvement of Foreign Service personnel in the following projects (further described in a Trust announcement entitled *Grants Awarded in 2003* and available at www.kirbysimontrust.org):

- **Educational Projects:** Library and materials for a nongovernmental school in India; teacher training and books for pre- and after-school programs in Guatemala; computer and books for children's libraries in rural India; public education about AIDS in Romania; furniture for pre-school classrooms in Ghana; electrical outlets and light fixtures for a school for Nicaraguan street children; dental hygiene for a local school in Honduras.
- **Other Projects for Children:** Playground equipment for slum children in India and the following projects at orphanages: dental unit (Ukraine), security wall (Columbia), toilet (Zambia), mattresses, auto maintenance and recreational area (Brazil), books and educational materials (El Salvador), field trip (Lithuania), engineering vocational training (Rwanda), physical therapy equipment and services (Bulgaria), pre-school classrooms (Bolivia).
- **Facilities for the Homeless:** Sports equipment for an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan; house building for hurricane victims in Honduras; rehabilitation of two refugee centers in Greece; clothing for abandoned children in Columbia.
- **Facilities for the Ill and Disabled:** Renovation of a small ward at a children's hospital in Ghana.
- **Skills Training Projects:** Roofing, storage and supplies for a women's papermaking cooperative in Burkina Faso; cosmetology training for pregnant girls in Panama.
- **Projects for Foreign Service Children:** Soccer program serving Foreign Service (and other

"international") youths and Mongolian street children; an initiative to ease the transition for Foreign Service children subject to emergency evacuations from countries in crisis conditions.

The Trust now invites the submission of proposals for support in 2004. It is anticipated that most of the new grants will fall within the same funding range as the 2003 awards, and that projects assisted by the Trust will reflect a variety of interests and approaches, some of which are illustrated by the 2003 grants.

Grants provided by the Trust can be used to defray a wide range of project expenses, such as acquisition of equipment, books and supplies, travel and data collection costs, and dissemination of materials. Grant funds from the Trust, however, cannot be used to pay salaries or other compensation to U.S. Government employees or their family members. Because of the limited resources available to the Trust, it is not in a position to support projects that have reasonable prospects of obtaining all the funds they need from other sources, or that propose to conduct activities closely similar to those undertaken by other public or private programs, or that cannot be carried out effectively with Trust-size grants.

The Trustees wish to emphasize that the Trust will provide support for a project operated by a charitable or educational organization only where the Foreign Service-related applicant(s) play an active part in initiating and carrying out the project, apart from fundraising.

A proposal should include a description of the project, what it is intended to achieve, and the role to be played by the applicant(s); a preliminary plan for disseminating the results of the project; a budget; other available funding, if any; and a brief biography of the applicant(s). Proposals should be no longer than five double-spaced pages (exclusive of budget and biographical material).

Proposals must be received no later than March 1, 2004 and may be submitted via mail, fax or e-mail to:

**J. Kirby Simon Foreign Service Trust
82 Edgehill Road
New Haven, CT 06511
TEL: 203 432 2698 FAX: 203-432-0063
info@kirbysimontrust.org**

Further information about the Trust can be found on the Web at www.kirbysimontrust.org.

IS YOUR VIRGINIA DRIVER'S LICENSE ABOUT TO EXPIRE?

RICHMOND - Do you know the date that your Virginia driver's license expires? Taking a minute to find out now may save you time later. A new law, which went into effect January 1, 2004 requires drivers who have allowed their driver's licenses to expire to prove that they are either a U.S. citizen or legally authorized to be in the country.

The LEGAL PRESENCE LAW passed by the 2003 General Assembly adds a fourth requirement to the driver's licensing process. Applicants must provide documents that prove identity, Virginia residency, legal presence and their social security number, if they have one. The new law applies to individuals renewing expired licenses, reinstating suspended or revoked licenses and applying for original licenses or photo ID cards. **The law does not apply to an individual renewing a driver's license unless the license has expired.**

<http://www.dmv.state.va.us/webdoc/general/news/news.asp?id=3941>

Stop the Presses! Good news for Military and Foreign Service personnel posted overseas. The Virginia DMV will grant a **military and diplomatic extension** of an expired Virginia driver's license (Take Note: Unfortunately, this extension does not apply to family members). Jim Davidson at DMV headquarters in Richmond will see that you get your extension or answer any questions you may have--just email Jim at dmvj3d@dmv.state.va.us. Reminder: to avoid getting in a crunch, you may renew your VA license up to two years before the expiration date. Again, contact Jim to request the appropriate form (the form is not available on the DMV website).

FAMILY MEMBER EMPLOYMENT

GOVERNMENT JOB APPLICATIONS: HIT OR MISS!

Many Foreign Service family members are qualified, experienced, and interested in pursuing a professional career with the government. With experience in a variety of jobs at post and/or in the Department of State, it is not surprising to find family members in the process of applying for a federal government job.

Whenever applying for a job, any job, your written application is critical to making it to the next step. However, applying for a federal government position demands that the entire application package be complete. An incomplete application will end your chances of even making it to an interview, much less landing the job! Therefore, it is worthwhile to learn more about the required application packages and recently adopted guidelines.

The Federal Hiring Process is made up of several stages:

1. Job Announcement
2. Submission of applications packet
3. Evaluation of your application for the specific job applied for. If you qualify, it is called "passing the cert" resulting in notification that your application has been accepted and

that you are being considered for an interview. At this point, Human Resources will forward the application to the hiring officials in the Bureau where the job exists.

4. If you have been selected for an interview, you will receive a notification or phone call. If not, you may not receive any communication for months.

You may apply by using one of these forms/formats:

The Federal Resume

The Federal Government Written Resume is the preferred format for Federal government job application in Washington D.C. The resume must include all information requested in addition to details of your qualifications. If your resume does not provide all of the information requested in the Job Opening Announcement, you may not be considered.

The SF-171 the SF-171 form has been around for a long time and is still in use.

The OF-612 the Optional Application for Federal Employment. This is a shorter form than the SF-171 but does not have all of the information required, resulting in a request for more information.

OPM Occupational Questionnaire

Some Federal government job announcements may require you to take the challenging OPM Occupational Questionnaire on-line. Often, candidates misjudge the questions and underrate their own skills or experience, which may result in getting insufficient ratings to make it to an interview. It is important to fill out this questionnaire with a job counselor's advice. Print out a copy of the questionnaire and, if you are currently a Federal government employee, make an appointment with a DOS Career Development Resource Center job counselor for assistance at (202) 663-3042. Occupational questionnaires differ for different jobs.

The application package serves:

- To determine your eligibility for the job
- To give you the opportunity to present your qualifications and skills in an organized way
- To provide you with a marketing tool
- To get you selected for an interview, and, hopefully, as the candidate for the job

Required information for the Federal Government Written Resume:

- Job announcement number, title, grade(s) of the job you are applying for
- Personal Information - full name, mailing address (include zip code), and day and evening phone numbers
- Social Security number
- Country of Citizenship
- Veteran's Preference (if any)
- Reinstatement eligibility for Civil Service (if requested, attach SF-50 as proof of your career or career-conditional status)
- Highest Federal civilian grade held (Highest Previous Rate) to be considered for the hiring committee

Education:**COLLEGES OR UNIVERSITIES**

Name, City, State, major, degrees received (list in what field)-

BS, International Relations, 1998
No Name University, Tulsa, Oklahoma

(If you did not earn a degree you must show total credits earned and indicate whether semester or quarter hours)

HIGH SCHOOL

Name, City, State; date of diploma or equivalent

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs), or Ranking Factors

Your application must specifically address each and every KSA or Ranking Factor as stated on the job announcement. In addition to your resume, you must include a supplemental sheet that addresses each KSA/Ranking Factor in the order in which they appear on the job announcement. You must cite specific examples (including procedures, knowledge, tasks) of work you have done which demonstrates your ability to perform the function of the factor you are addressing. The KSA/Ranking Factors are listed on the job announcement in the order of importance. It is important to note that many hiring officials regard this demonstration of your specific qualifications for the job the most important part of your application. Give this supplemental statement the attention and time it deserves. Be concise.

The grade level of the job you are applying for will be reflected in the length of your supplemental statement. The higher the grade level (requiring greater skills, experience, knowledge), the longer the statement.

General:

- A written Federal application package may be 10 pages or more, compared to a private sector application which should be no more than 2 pages.
- Read the Vacancy or Job Opening Announcement very well. Follow all the directions carefully.
- If there is an option on how to turn in your application package, choose to hand-carry, or fax the package to the person indicated. To ensure an accurate and complete application package, do not hesitate to call or email the contact person with any questions.

FOREIGN SERVICE WRITTEN EXAM DATE

Are you ready for a lifetime of adventure? A Foreign Service career may be your ticket. Becoming a Foreign Service Officer begins with taking the Foreign Service Written Exam. Registration has opened for this year's April 24, 2004 exam. Deadlines for registration are March 24 in the U.S. and March 17 overseas. Visit the Department of State's interactive web

site, <http://www.careers.state.gov>, to determine your eligibility for a career in the Foreign Service and to register for the exam.

ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION OF SF-50s

On December 15, 2003, the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) announced the availability of SF-50s (Notifications of Personnel Action) at the desktop.

Every direct-hire employee (including family members on FMAs) has access to the SF-50s maintained in their Administrative Official Personnel Folder online via our eOPF application. eOPF is available through the HR-Online portal, which allows a single user registration, logon and security enhanced authentication for HR's web-based applications.

Paper copies of SF-50s will no longer be distributed manually. Employees can request paper copies from their bureau personnelist.

GETTING INTO CONSULAR ASSOCIATE TRAINING

A few words about Consular Associate (CA) training: **NEED versus SPACE**. That sums up how an AEFM gets into CA training. Example: A post has a Consular Associate position open, is willing to pay for training, and has available an AEFM at post with a valid security clearance. That applicant for training would go to the top of the list **IF** a space is available (if you are in the Washington area and your sponsor does not have an onward assignment you are not eligible for Consular Associate Training). Again, the key word here is SPACE. This course fills up quickly with Junior Officers leaving few slots for AEFMs. Please contact Vanja Huth Huthvs2@state.gov if you are interested in signing-on for the course.

NEWS FROM THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

On-line Language Classes Open to EFM's

Department of State EFM's may enroll in on-line distance learning language classes for free if they are Department of State EFM's. If sponsored by another agency, that agency is required to reimburse State for the classes. Language enrollments are processed through the FSO's CDA or CDO who must enroll the EFM. For complete information, including courses offered and how to enroll, visit FSI's Office of the Registrar web page- <http://fsi.state.gov/admin/reg/default.asp?CAT=Language%20Studies&TOP=Distance%20Learning>

Part-time Job Opportunity at FSI Transition Center, Summer 2004

The Transition Center at the Foreign Service Institute is seeking applications for the following positions:

- YDD/YSOS Coordinator
- YDD/YSOS Teachers (3)
- YDD/YSOS Teacher's aides (3)

Young Diplomats Day (YDD) is a one-day introduction to the world of diplomacy for children of USG employees assigned abroad. Children in grades two through twelve participate in a variety of activities including role-play, arts and crafts, and open discussion in age-appropriate classrooms (elementary, middle and high school).

Youth Security Overseas Seminar (YSOS) is a one-day course for children in grades two through twelve. Children explore safety and security threats they might face in an overseas environment and identify resources to protect themselves. YDD and YSOS together is a two-day diplomatic training program for Foreign Service kids.

YDD is offered four times during the summer, and YSOS is offered seven times in the summer and once in February.

For a complete job description and application information, interested persons should contact Pat Schofield at SchofieldPF@State.gov.



EDUCATION AND YOUTH

KID-VID CONTEST--CALLING ALL U.S. MISSION KIDS BETWEEN AGES 10-18...

The Overseas Briefing Center in Conjunction with the Foreign Service Youth Foundation announces the 2004 KID-VID Contest

- ◆ OBC wants a video of your post from your kid's viewpoint.
- ◆ Cash prizes offered to the top winners.
- ◆ See your CLO or Management Office for contest rules.
- ◆ Deadline: April 15, 2004



SUPPORT SERVICES

SECURITY CLEARANCES AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

Recently, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) was asked, "If I seek mental health counseling, will it affect my security clearance?" We thought the answer deserved to be shared with others who might have a similar concern.

We may all experience stress and other tensions in our lives. In certain circumstances, some of us may want to seek professional assistance in coping with the stress. Since most Department employees must have active security clearances, the above question is a fair one, but one that should NOT lead you to avoid seeking timely professional assistance. Understanding how information about any mental health counseling you receive will be handled and assessed will hopefully make your decision easier.

The Standard Form 86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions, which you complete each time your clearance is updated, specifically asks whether you consulted with a medical care provider for mental health reasons. This question requires a “Yes” or “No” reply. If your mental health consultations were for situations involving marital, family or grief-related issues, as long as violence on your part was not involved, then you do not have to provide any further information on the form. So, for example, if you received mental health counseling to learn how to better deal with issues in your marriage, and those issues are not related to violence by you, then at the time of your 5-year update you would answer “Yes” to Question 21 on the SF-86. You are not required to provide anything further, such as dates of treatment or the identity of the therapist or doctor. As part of the investigative process, a DS investigator will personally interview you. The investigator may ask general questions about the counseling; but this is done only to confirm the reason for the counseling and not to obtain specific details. Employees should be aware that DS does not seek confidential medical information directly from the employees’ health care providers, since only Department medical professionals are authorized to do so.

Certain other situations may require an assessment of the employee’s ability to safeguard classified information. MED seeks certain information, makes its assessment, and then provides its recommendation to DS clearance adjudicators. NO detailed personal medical information is shared with DS. The medical factors weighed in such situations focus on conditions that may impact an employee’s judgment, reliability, or stability. Important considerations in making this decision include whether the employee is following appropriate medical advice and whether medication and/or other available treatment bring the condition under control.

If you would like more information on the adjudicative guidelines used by all federal agencies to make clearance decisions, please visit the Authorities and Guidelines link on our web site at <http://dsweb.state.gov/pss>.

IQ: INFORMATION QUEST

Let IQ: Information Quest Help You Make the New Year a Success!

This free benefit for permanent Department of State employees and Family Member Appointees overseas, provides counseling, education and referrals to help you manage care-giving issues. Whether you need child or adult care services, stress management information, or simply a break from your care-giving duties, work/life specialists can help 24/7. For more information visit www.worklife4you.com, or by telephone at 800-222-0364 (hearing-impaired, call 888-264-7848).

Please Note: Not all agencies have access to the same services. For example, some agencies have web only access; thus their employees cannot use the legal referral and free consultation service available to State employees. Employees of agencies other than State should contact their headquarters on how to access the service.

Federal Agencies that provide LifeCare.com resource referral service to employees (as of 8-28-03)

Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Central Intelligence Agency
Defense Contract Management Agency
Defense Logistics Agency

Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Federal Occupational Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Federal Reserve Bank of New York
Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas
Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security
Library of Congress
National Imagery and Mapping Agency
NASA Goddard Space Flight Center
Office of Thrift Supervision, U.S. Department of the Treasury
Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation
Program Support Center, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Southwest Complex, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Agency for International Development
U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Department of Labor
U.S. Department of State
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Reg. IX U.S. General Accounting Office
U.S. Mint, U.S. Department of the Treasury
U.S. Postal Service
U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission